

CHAPTER VII

ARMY AND NAVY

A CIVILIAN who undertakes to write the history of his country during the time when it was engaged in a great war has peculiar difficulties to overcome. Personally he may be most interested in the development of government or society, and best qualified to treat them : he is obliged nevertheless to enter unfamiliar fields, and to master a new series of problems. In relating military and naval affairs he is constantly liable to blunder. For that reason Marshal Schomberg advised Bishop Burnet ' never to meddle in the relation of military matters. He said, some affected to relate those affairs in all the terms of war, in which they committed errors that exposed them to the scorn of all commanders/ On the other hand soldiers and sailors are not as a rule accustomed to weigh authorities, and their accounts of historical events are often based on bad evidence or on a curious mixture of good and bad evidence. And, besides that, they often do not possess the art of making technical questions intelligible to the non-professional reader. Swift's comment on Schomberg's warning to Burnet was : ' Very foolish advice, for soldiers cannot write/ ' Encouraged, no doubt, by Swift's dictum, Macaulay faced the risks which Schomberg had pointed out. One part of the task, however, was made

easier for him by
his political career. From 1839 to 1841 it
had been his
duty, as Secretary at War, to introduce the
Annual Army

¹ Burnet, *Own Time*, i. 49.